

## Happy Christmas and A Peaceful New Year

Dear Friends,

It is time once again to wish you a very happy Christmas and a more peaceful New Year. 2005 has been a special year for us. In January Marcus retired as 'vicar' of the Baldons and Nuneham Courtenay and we moved to the nearby village of Clifton Hampden. Mary has celebrated a special birthday and there have been many happy family occasions. At the same time, the troubled world situation has kept us busier than ever with interfaith work and we have travelled extensively.

*That's all you need to know, but do read on if you have time.*

The parish gave us a great send off and very generously commissioned a beautiful stained glass window 'to the glory of God' and in celebration of our ministry in the villages and our interfaith work. As you can see from the picture, the window tells of the creation, working up from the fish and the sea to the trees and the birds – with doves of peace near the top. The artist was Nicola Kantorowicz

We were very sorry to leave the Baldons and the lovely rectory after eleven happy and fulfilling years. We are now well settled in our 1960s semi-detached house, which is in a quiet close. Somehow we have fitted in much of our furniture and books and our usual clutter makes it feel like home. There is still a lot to sort out, but we can now get the nose of a car in the garage. The walks beside Thames are ideal for Toffee. Marcus has not been exactly twiddling his thumbs in 'retirement'. Besides putting up shelves and giving some character and colour to the garden, he has continued his interfaith work, with a lot of speaking and travelling as well as writing.

He has attended a conference on 'Globalisation for the Common Good' in Kenya, a Conference hosted by the Brahma Kumaris in India on 'The Inner Voice of Peace' and we both went to the meeting of the Peace Council in New York, at which the Dalai Lama spoke at a beautiful interfaith service and also to a delightful Prayer Congress in Hamburg. All these events, which are seldom reported, are evidence of a real spirit of renewal. For health reasons, Marcus will have to cut down on travelling, at least for a time.

His new book *A Heart for the World: the Interfaith Alternative* is to be published in January by John Hunt ([www.o-books.com](http://www.o-books.com)). He also co-authored with Dr Kamran Mofid *Promoting the Common Good: Bringing Economics and Theology Together Again*, and he gave the Fred Blum Memorial Lecture at the Abbey at Sutton Courtenay.

Because we are still in the Dorchester-on-Thames Team area, Marcus has also taken a number of services in nearby villages.

'Retirement' is not a word in Mary's vocabulary. She continues as a part-time renal social worker and with the Baldon players. Instead of being the determined Lady Brockhurst (in the *Boyfriend*), keeping her flirtatious husband on a tight rein, she is currently an ineffective wife in *A Chorus of Disapproval*. Rachel arranged a lovely surprise party for Mary's special birthday in January – at which time the magistrates dispensed with her services, but not before she spoke at a farewell dinner. Indeed she was so funny that she put the men to shame and the magistrates have decided to have no more such dinners!

As they live nearby, we see quite a lot of Rachel and Peter and their girls, Kathryn, Helen and Sarah – all now doing well at Didcot Girls School – and Anna, who has three more years at Harwell Primary School, are always very welcoming.

Jeremy and Amanda now live in Blagdon in Somerset so we do not see them so often, but try to visit them at least once a month. Lizzie has settled well at the local school and Christina enjoys her nursery school. We feel very blessed to have six beautiful, intelligent and lively granddaughters

We had a lovely holiday with Rachel and family in Norfolk and with Jeremy and family in Spain. In both cases we had a lot of sunshine and all the girls are good swimmers and got us into both the North Sea and the Mediterranean. Our Australian cousins, Ray and Jan Batey kindly invited us to join them in Cornwall, which again was a happy time.

We hope next September to lead a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

We apologise that some of you did not receive our 2004 Christmas letter. We thought we posted them all – but maybe we shall find them in a box we have not yet unpacked. We are sending this year's letter in good time so that you have our new address. 'Retirement' has given us time to visit more of our friends, but do let us know if you are travelling near Oxford and come and see us in our new home.

*With our love*

*Mary and Marcus*

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